

# the "EYE"

## Lincoln Neighborhood Watch

Fall & Winter-2009/2010

### OPEN DOORS and LOST DREAMS Officer J. Hellmuth

When I was thinking of a title for this article, I couldn't help but think back to a call I took when I first became a police officer nine years ago- I went to a report of a theft of a bicycle. Long story short, the owner of the house left the garage door open. The owner of the bicycle, eight year old David, said that whoever had taken the bicycle had "broke his heart". Apparently, David had received that bike from his grandfather, who had since passed on. That bicycle meant a lot of things to David.

Now, fast forward to today and I am still finding garage doors open. But bicycles have not been the item on the thieves' radar, but rather appliances and home furnishings. Recently, the Northeast team took three different reports from owners of newly built homes. The realtors and builders reported that someone entered the homes and removed high-end stainless steel appliances and home furnishings (tables, chairs, vases, etc.). The furnishings were put there by the realtors to make the home more appealing to the potential buyer. Of the three, two of the burglaries had no signs of forced entry, while the third one had a back door forced open.

If there are no signs of forced entry, it is often the case that someone left a door open or unlocked. I have checked the particular area of town numerous times since those incidents and have found several garage doors and breeze-way doors that lead to the inside of the house unlocked. Many of the homes are realtor-managed and others are homes under construction, still maintained by the builders. We need to make sure that we are not making it easy for the bad guys to take things by leaving doors open!

To the realtors, please take the time to walk through your house and make sure that all of the doors, including garage doors and breeze-way doors, are locked. To the builders, please take the time to secure the entries as best as possible if they cannot be locked. And finally to the citizens, keep locking your doors and shutting your garages even if you are only "gone for a minute". By doing that, everyone will be protecting someone's "dream"!

### STORAGE UNIT BURGLARIES

Throughout the spring and into the late summer months there was an upswing in the number of storage units being broken into. The most notable thing about the burglaries was that only those units with weak locking mechanisms were entered. If the unit was secured with a disc lock or shrouded-haspl lock it was not tampered with. A small investment to buy a more secure lock can make a big difference.




When using a storage unit maintain an inventory of what is kept there. Write a description of your property including a serial number if possible. Photographing the belongings could also be beneficial in case of a theft. Keep all of your inventory information at a separate location such as your home or a safe-deposit box.



### DOOR TO DOOR SALES PROBLEMS

Some out of state groups continue to drop young people off in neighborhoods so they can go door-to-door on the pretense of selling magazines. Several of the groups this summer were involved in scams where money was taken with no intent to actually provide the subscription that was purchased. City law provides that anyone soliciting door-to-door is required to apply for a permit. Anyone caught without a permit is cited or arrested which hopefully discourages them from continuing this activity. If someone is selling at your door just tell them, "No thank you!"

### Attempts at scams continue to be regularly reported in Lincoln. Here are some of the more common scenarios:

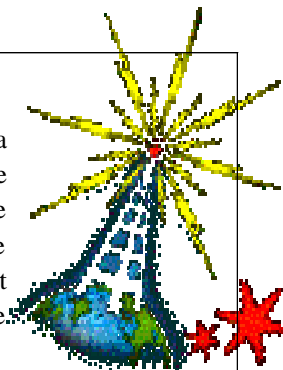
-  An email or phone call is received stating a sweepstakes or prize has been won, but fees or taxes need to be paid. If sent, the victim will be out the money, and will often receive more correspondence stating additional money needs to be sent.
-  An email or phone call is received reference making a purchase, often in response to an ad selling goods or services. The scammer will send a counterfeit check for more than the amount owed, asking that once the check is cashed the difference should be sent back to him. If the victim cashes the fake check, they will end up owing their bank the amount it was for.
-  A phone call is received from a person claiming to be a relative, saying they have been arrested and need money sent for bail. This scam often takes the form of a person calling from Canada claiming to be a nephew or grandson.

Remember, if it sounds too good to be true it is too good to be true!

## INTERNET SAFETY TIPS:

### With information from the National Crime Prevention Council

Internet, blogs, chat rooms, MySpace, Facebook, Twitter, cell phones, and texting all now surround us in a tidal wave of free flowing frequencies. Technology based communication continues to evolve and become more mainstream in our society today. While people have changed the means they use to talk to each other the con-artists have also evolved- using the same technology to perpetuate their age-old trade of taking advantage of people. There are many good reasons to use the internet and cell phones for legitimate purposes but everyone needs to remember that there are a variety of other persons, with ill intents, willing to take advantage of their anonymity and a potential victim's good nature.

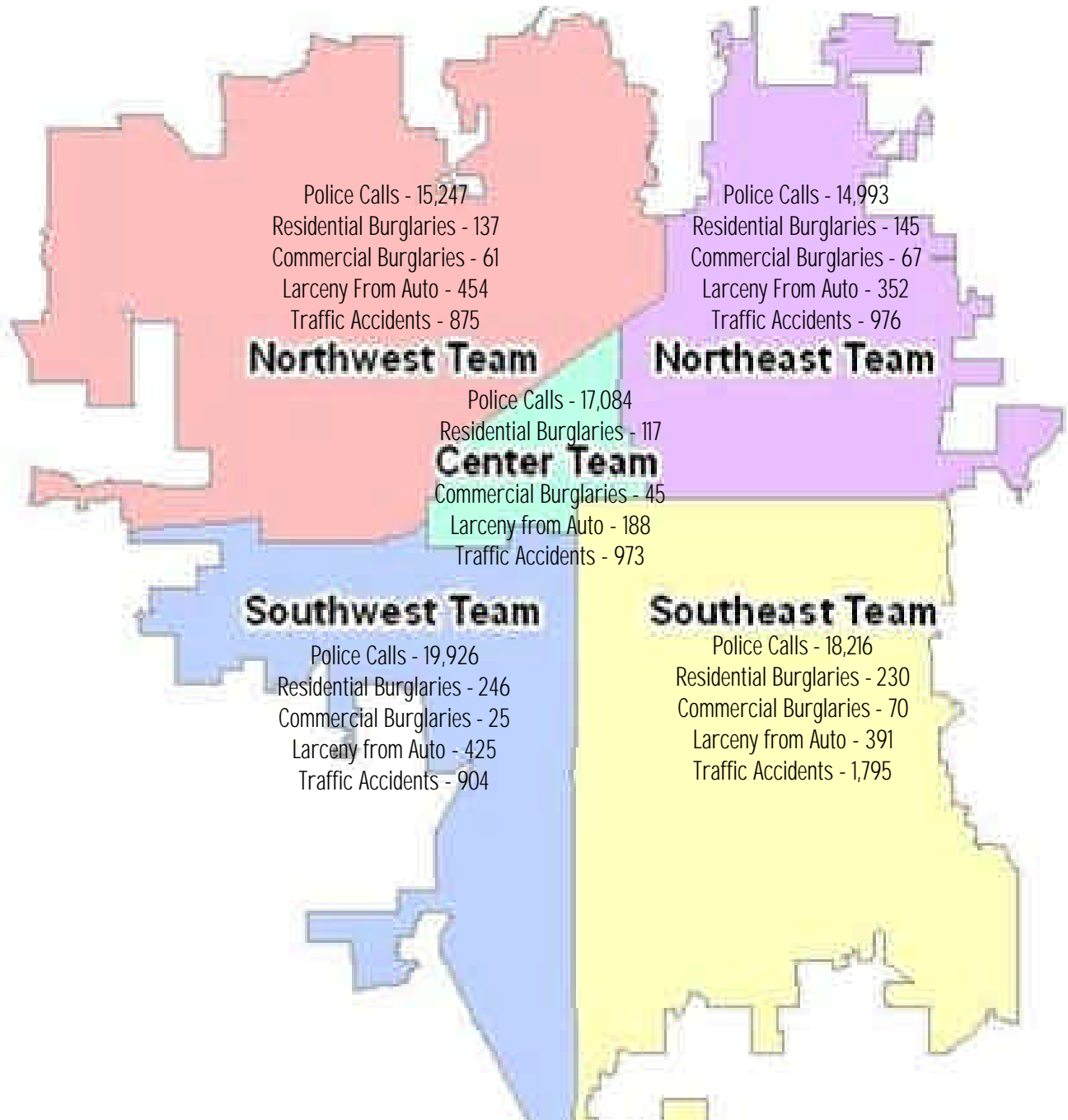


Teens and young adults, who represent a large number of the people embracing all this technology, are susceptible to scams and being victimized. This age group generally feels little risk in (literally) exposing themselves in a variety of these electronic venues. They often give out personal information and even photographs of themselves to people they assume are their friends but actually are someone waiting to take advantage of them. Other typical problems of adolescence, such as bullying, can also now take place through this technology- what once could be spread by word through a school building can now be spread to every place that has access to electronic information!

Children have also been victimized through these avenues. The same predators we would protect our children from as they played in the park or walked down the street now use the internet to their advantage. Adults need to monitor what children are doing and looking at on-line. Just as we teach them about strangers they may encounter in person we need to teach them that anyone they talk to over a computer is a stranger. Here are some safety tips for using the internet:

- ☞ Be aware that there are people online who would like to gain access to your personal information. Do not share this information unless you have initiated the exchange or are absolutely sure of who is receiving it.
- ☞ Do not use your name, date of birth, address, or any other personal information for passwords. These passwords are easily cracked by hackers. In fact, it is suggested that for any password, you should not use a word that is found in the dictionary, as there are hacking programs that will attempt every word in the dictionary.
- ☞ Never disclose personal information in response to an email. Legitimate businesses would never ask you to do this. If an email or pop-up ad requests you to confirm personal information, even if it looks genuine, it is an example of phishing and should be reported to **reportphishing@antiphishing.org**, the attorneys at the Securities and Exchange Commission at **enforcement@sec.gov**, and to the Federal Trade Commission at **uce@ftc.gov**.
- ☞ If you are concerned about an email you receive from a company, contact that company by phone to verify the information. If there is a web link provided in the email, type it directly into your browser instead of using the link or copying and pasting it, as some links can be redirected to other sites.
- ☞ When giving personal information over a website, check to make sure that site is secure. Look at the first part of the web address in your browser. It should read **https://** and not **http://**
- ☞ Regularly check your credit card and bank statements and keep track of your transactions. Also, log into your online accounts frequently. This way, you will be able to notice any changes to your account soon after it happens.
- ☞ Remember that online information and images can live forever. It can be very hard and sometimes impossible to take down information that is posted, and photos and information may already have been copied and posted elsewhere.
- ☞ Some college admissions boards and employers are checking social networking sites before they admit students or hire people.
- ☞ Tell your children not to post any identifying information online. This includes their cell phone number, address, hometown, school name, and anything else that a stranger could use to locate them. Explain that anyone in the world can access what they post online. Make sure that children understand that some people they meet online may not be who they say they are. Explain that on the Internet many people are not truthful about their identity and may even pretend to be someone else. It's important to stress that young people should never meet people face-to-face that they met online. Have your children tell you if they ever see anything online that makes them uncomfortable. Make sure they understand that you won't blame them. Ask them to come to you if anything happens online that hurts or scares them. Tell them that you won't punish them by banning them from the Internet – this is a big reason why many kids don't talk to their parents about their online problems.
- ☞ Report any cases of possible child sexual exploitation, no matter how small.

**SUMMARY OF REPORTED CRIMES-between 1-1-2009 and 8-31-2009**



**STATISTICAL SUMMARY FOR JANUARY THROUGH AUGUST OF 2009:** Calls for service across the city have remained at a constant rate when compared to 2008 with only a 0.1% increase from this same time last year. Residential burglaries increased by 9.6% but we have cleared 15.5% of those cases which is an improvement from 2008. Again- a significant number of these burglaries can be attributed to garage doors being left open and other lax security practices around the home. More attention to security issues could greatly reduce residential burglaries. Commercial burglaries are up almost 34% (269 in 2009 vs. 201 in 2008) and so far this year we have cleared 32.3% of those. Larcenies from vehicles are down again this year- so far by 2% compared to last year. We want everyone to maintain awareness of securing items in their car so they do not become an easy target. Also, please continue to call LPD, day or night, about suspicious or unusual activity in your neighborhood. The number of traffic accidents across the city have gone down by 1.7%, BUT, on the Southeast team the number of accidents went up by 6.9%! Looking at the team area charts above you can see the disparate number of accidents suffered by the Southeast team. Our last issue of "The EYE" included articles about driving nice and driving safe. We all need to take a part in improving our driving behavior so everyone on the road is safe. Please reduce distractions and focus on what is around you as you drive.

## The "EYE"

### CHANGES TO NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

Throughout the Lincoln Police Department we continue to reassess our work load and priorities to make the best use of our resources. Of course our primary goal, and purpose, is to enforce laws and have staffing available to respond to citizen's calls. During the last efforts of drafting the city-wide budget it was decided to cut the money used for printing and mailing "The EYE" newsletter. The newsletter will now be exclusively available on-line on the LPD website at: [www.lincoln.ne.gov/city/police/crime/eye.htm](http://www.lincoln.ne.gov/city/police/crime/eye.htm)

The same website has access to a variety of information pertinent to neighborhood groups including crime statistics, current calls for service in your area, Crime Stoppers and crime prevention publications. Please use these resources to keep your groups informed about what is occurring near your neighborhood. As always, Neighborhood Watch groups are very important to our city's success in preventing crime and keeping Lincoln one of the best places to live. Although we will not be sending mailings any longer our department remains dedicated in providing citizens with current information. Everything that previously went through the mail is available on the website. Please try to share information you receive with those in your group who may not have access to our website. Communication among group members is very important in maintaining a viable Neighborhood Watch.

### ON-LINE RESOURCES FOR NEIGHBORHOODS

There are a variety of on-line templates to support neighborhood group interaction. These web-sites are similar to popular social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace but are designed specifically for neighborhoods, communities and other geographic areas. Doing a simple on-line search for "neighborhood community websites" yielded a number of choices to consider. Some of the options to choose from included: i-neighbors.com; LifeAt.com; and, Villageloop.com. These web-sites are independently ran and the police department will not specifically endorse any one of these over another. One format may work for one neighborhood while another group prefers a different one so picking will be an individual choice. The websites are password protected so your group can maintain some security while sharing information (though remember you should not post personal or financially sensitive material). As our Neighborhood Watch program evolves with the times (both budgetary and technological) these web-sites offer another option for groups to organize, share information, work together to address local problems and prevent crime in your neighborhoods.

### MOVE OVER LAW Nebraska legislative changes

The state legislature implemented a new law this fall intending to make the roadways safer for emergency responders and people needing assistance at the edge of the roadway.

60-6,378 LB92, effective 8-30-2009:

"A driver on a controlled-access highway with at least two adjacent lanes of travel in the same direction on the same side of the highway where a stopped authorized emergency vehicle or road assistance vehicle is using proper audible or visual signals, the driver of the vehicle shall proceed with due care and caution and yield the right-of-way by moving into a lane at least one moving lane apart from the stopped authorized emergency vehicle or road assistance vehicle unless directed otherwise by a peace officer or other authorized emergency personnel."

For example, if you encounter emergency vehicles stopped on the shoulder of a 4-lane highway or interstate roadway you should move over into the left lane leaving the lane adjacent to the emergency empty. Use good judgment when yielding— don't make abrupt or unsafe lane changes. Also, remember that if emergency vehicles are traveling with lights and sirens down the road you need to yield to the right side of the road.

### PLEASE CHECK OUT THESE

### ON-LINE RESOURCES:



In progress crime?  
CALL: 911

Belated crime?  
CALL: 441-6000

[www.lincoln.ne.gov/city/police](http://www.lincoln.ne.gov/city/police)

Read "The Chief's Corner"  
at: [lpd304.blogspot.com](http://lpd304.blogspot.com)

### LARCENY FROM AUTO PREVENTION

The Lincoln Police Dept. once again conducted its successful Crime Free Dollars program at Lincoln's public high schools in cooperation with AAA. Police Officers checked the school parking lots for vehicles that were locked and had no valuables in view. These vehicles were entered into a drawing, with a winner from each school getting \$50 courtesy of AAA.

The winners were:

- ♦ Jordan Watteyne from East High School;
- ♦ CJ Lupori from Southeast High School;
- ♦ Trey Wayne from Southwest High School;
- ♦ Erin Andrews from Northeast High School;
- ♦ Caden Duncan from Northstar High School;
- ♦ ThaDah Eh from Lincoln High School.

Congratulations to the winners, and thank you to AAA for helping to make this project a success!



AAA manager Marilyn Muir and Officer Matt Tangen draw winning names for CRIME FREE DOLLARS